

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 HA-05 TRSE-00 EB-08 /090 W
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R 211616Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7149
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SF
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON PRIME MINISTERS DEPARTMENT

1. SUMMARY: IN THE COURSE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE SO FAR THIS YEAR, JOHN VORSTER REAFFIRMED
HIS INTENTION TO PROCEED WITH THE NATIONAL PARTY POLICY
OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, AND GAVE LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CHANGE.
NATIONALIST CONSERVATIVES WELCOMED VORSTER'S EXPOSITION WHILE
THE LIBERAL ENGLISH-PRESS EXPRESSED BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.
NATIONALIST VERLIGTES, HOWEVER, ARGUE THAT IT WAS A POLITICAL
PERFORMANCE TO APPEASE THE RIGHT WING AND THAT THE DOOR FOR
CHANGE WAS STILL OPEN. END SUMMARY.

2. THE APRIL 11-13 PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE PRIME
MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT BUDGET VOTE WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT
DEBATE SO FAR THIS SESSION, WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND
THE OPPOSITION DEALING IN DETAIL WITH IMPORTANT
MATTERS OF INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY. THE PRIME
MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON TRANSKEI AND NAMIBIA, WHICH
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WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SEGMENT
OF THE DEBATE, HAVE BEEN REPORTED SEPARATELY (CAPE TOWN 723,
746). VORSTER'S FIRST STATEMENTS TO PARLIAMENT THIS YEAR
ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS SERVED BASICALLY TO REAFFIRM HIS COMMITMENT
TO SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT; THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE, HE INSISTED, WAS
A UNITARY STATE BASED ON ONE MAN ONE VOTE WHICH MEANT BLACK
DOMINATION. VORSTER REJECTED AN EVENTUAL FEDERAL OR

DONFEDERAL SYSTEM FOR SOUTH AFRICA, AND SAID HE WOULD PREFER AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION IN WHICH WHITE SOUTH AFRICA AND THE INDEPENDENT HOMELANDS MAINTAIN EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. HE ALSO REJECTED THE IDEA OFTEN FLOATED AMONG VERLIGTE NATIONALISTS THAT SOWETO AND OTHER BLACK URBAN AREAS SHOULD EVENTUALLY DEVELOP INTO "CITY STATES," BUT HE FAVORED GRANTING LOCAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO BLACK URBAN COUNCILS, INCLUDING LAW AND ORDER AND EDUCATION.

3. VORSTER DID NOT ELABORATE IN DETAIL ON THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, BUT MADE CLEAR THAT THE COUNCIL OF CABINETS WILL MAINTAIN ULTIMATE CONTROL, AND THAT THE STATE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE EXECUTIVE ACTION IF MATTERS ARE IN DISPUTE. ALTHOUGH AN INDIAN OR COLORED COULD IN THEORY BECOME STATE PRESIDENT, HE SAID, AS LONG AS THE NATIONAL PARTY REMAINS IN POWER, THE PRESIDENT WILL BE WHITE. VORSTER DID NOT ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF WHO WOULD CONTROL NATIONAL MINISTRIES SUCH AS DEFENSE AND FINANCE UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION. HE REITERATED THAT THE COLORED AND INDIAN PARLIAMENTS WOULD HAVE "EXCLUSIVE" CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN AFFAIRS," AND WOULD BE ABLE, IF THEY WISH, TO OPEN THEIR SCHOOLS AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS TO ALL RACES.

4. VORSTER SUPPORTED CONNIE MULDER'S REMARK EARLIER IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SESSION THAT ALL BLACKS WILL EVENTUALLY LOSE SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP, BUT HE ALSO CONFIRMED THAT HOMELANDS WHICH DO NOT WISH INDEPENDENCE WOULD NOT BE FORCED TO ACCEPT IT. HE ASSERTED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE HOMELANDS CONSOLIDATED, BUT THAT IN ORDER TO GIVE BLACK LEADERS ALL THE LAND THEY WANTED, HE WOULD NEED A COUNTRY FOUR TIMES THE SIZE OF SOUTH AFRICA. VORSTER REVEALED THAT THE SAG IS WORKING ON A PLAN TO ALLOW URBAN BLACKS TO OBTAIN A KIND OF "CERTIFICATE" ENABLING THEM TO SELL, BEQUEATH OR MORTGAGE THEIR HOMES. HE WAS ADAMANT, HOWEVER, THAT BLACKS WILL NOT ACTUALLY BE ALLOWED TO OWN THE LAND ON WHICH THEIR HOUSES STAND.

5. THE HARD-LINE TENOR OF VORSTER'S REMARKS WAS NOT SURPRISING TO MOST PARLIAMENTARY OBSERVERS, SINCE THEY WERE TYPICAL OF PAST PERFORMANCES IN WHICH HE HAS STAUNCHLY DEFENDED PAST POLICY AND GIVEN NO INDICATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE. NEVERTHELESS, HIS COMMENTS WERE A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR THE ENGLISH PRESS AND LIBERAL SOUTH AFRICAN WHO AT EACH SUCH OCCASION ARE HOPEFUL FOR A HINT OF A NEW DIRECTION. ONE POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

SUMMED UP VORSTER'S STAND AS "NO REAL CHANGE, BUSINESS AS USUAL."

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6. VERLIGTE NATIONALISTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE QUICK TO PUT THE BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS. JAN MARAIS, THE MOST LIBERAL OF ALL NAT MP'S, PRIVATELY DISMISSED THE GENERAL TENOR OF VORSTER'S STATEMENTS AS A POLITICAL PERFORMANCE AND ASSERTED THAT THEY DID NOT REFLECT INCREASING ACCEPTANCE WITHIN THE PARTY CAUCUS AND LEADERSHIP OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE. MARAIS SAID THAT AT THE APRIL 18 CAUCUS MEETING HE HAD POINTED TO THE LOST OPPORTUNITIES IN RHODESIA OVER THE YEARS AS A WARNING TO SOUTH AFRICA AND HAD BEEN SUPPORTED WITH "HEAR HEAR" BY SOME OF HIS AUDIENCE--AN UNTHINKABLE REACTION ONLY LAST YEAR, HE SAID.

7. IN ANOTHER VERLIGTE RESPONSE, "TRANSVALER" EDITOR, WILLEM DE KLERK, WRITING IN THE SUNDAY NEWSPAPER RAPPORT ON APRIL 16, INSISTED THAT VORSTER HAD IN FACT KEPT HIS OPTIONS OPEN, AND HAD NOT CLOSED THE DOOR ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, INCREASED SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR URBAN BLACKS, AND

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FURTHER HOMELAND CONSOLIDATION. DE KLERK ASSERTED THAT THERE
IS STILL MUCH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT TO COME IN GOVERNMENT
POLICY.
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